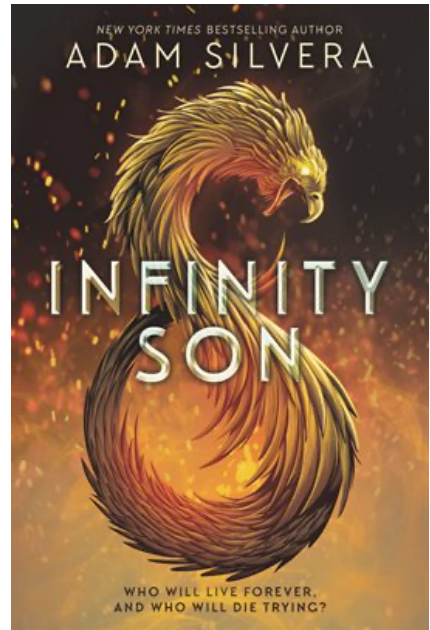


**BOOK REVIEW - *INFINITY SON* By Adam Silvera**

**PARENTAL ADVISORY - EXPLICIT  
CONTENT**

**SEXUALLY EXPLICIT CONTENT  
AVAILABLE AT TEXAS INDEPENDENT  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

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"How did they-

Wesley dashes off. How they found us doesn't matter right now.

I hug Ma and Prudencia and tell them I'll see them soon, then I run with Gravesend in my arms before they can stop me. I go for the roof first, shuddering whenever spellwork explodes, shaking the floors. I shout for Brighton, but he's not up here. Over the ledge, I see six enforcer tanks parked by the front entrance. I rest Gravesend in the corner of the roof, praying to the stars this will be the safest spot to leave her while I hunt down Brighton. I kiss her forehead and rush back down. Her cries follow me the whole way.

The halls are crowded. In the chaos, I see an enforcer kick down one door.

Then there's a whistle, and the enforcer falls asleep on the spot, allowing that celestial Zachary and an elderly woman to escape. I burst into rooms, calling Brighton's name and ushering stragglers out. I round the stairs when an enforcer hurls a citrine gem-grenade at me, and I'm quick and precise with a fire-dart. The grenade explodes midair, and the shock wave blasts the enforcer down the stairs. My wounds burn when I use my power, but I have to fight through it. I run to the lower level to find Eva healing that girl Grace, the one whose loud voice Maribelle hoped to use for security-like tonight. Once the colorful lights close the hole in Grace's stomach, I guide them into an empty classroom.

"Eva, what's going on?" I ask.

"They broke in. They must've gotten through our defenses, and our evacuation plans have all gone to without Atlas and Maribelle. I haven't seen Iris.

"Wesley said there are cars in back, beyond the fence. Go there. I'll send Iris your way if I find her.

I can't imagine Brighton would be in the music room right by the entrance, but if enforcers or anyone got their hands on him, maybe there will be some evidence that he was there in the first place, like his laptop or clothes. I cross paths with a duo of enforcers, dodging their spells that explode against the Forty-One: Gravesend

lockers behind me. Fire-darts take them out and I make it to the room.

Everything is wrecked--sheet stands have fallen on their sides, holes have been blown through drums, and the piano has folded in on itself. But no sign of Brighton.

Where the hell is he?

I move for the back door that leads to the auditorium's stage when someone shouts for me to freeze. I don't know if it's one enforcer or half a dozen, but I don't move.

This is it for me. I hope Brighton is okay, that Prudencia and Ma escaped, that Ness got far away, that the Spell Walkers win, that I won't be reborn into a

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world where Luna and the Blood Casters are living forever.

I brace myself when I hear a spell discharge. An enforcer blasts past me and slams into the wall, unconscious. I turn around to see my savior, expecting Iris, but it's another enforcer who's very muscular and taking deep breaths as gray light transforms him

Ness.

"You're back," I breathe, and I feel so energized and strong, like I could fight every day for the rest of my life

"I saw the tanks. I wasn't fast enough to warn you, but I had to help I crash into him with a hug and squeeze hard because everything is going wrong and he came back for me. "Brighton's missing, and Gravesend is alive and crying on the roof, and I can't do this alone.

"I'm here. Let's find your brother, grab Gravesend, and get the hell out of here.

We run through the auditorium, where two celestials are dead onstage. Ness drags me away, reminding me to focus as if forgetting dead bodies is easy to put out of my mind. The celestials here are trying to live, even if that means holing themselves up in an abandoned school so they won't be treated as threats to society. At the entrance to the cafeteria, Iris is deflecting spells with her fists as

brother and a good son and a good best friend and a good hero, and you're the only person not expecting anything from me."

There's something about his silence that pulls more words out of me. It reminds me of whenever I was upset as a kid and Dad would ask me what was wrong, and I would swear that I didn't want to talk about it, but he kept me company until I eventually burst and got everything off my chest.

"I wonder what my dad would think about me today," I say.

Before Ness can ask me about him or tell me to go away so he can eat his microwaved pancakes in peace, I tell him all about how accepting Dad was. He never questioned my sexuality and was quick to encourage me to shoot my shot with Nicholas because maybe I would marry my high school crush like he did He made sure I never felt inferior whenever Brighton's report cards were glowing and mine were disappointing.

"I really miss him, but maybe it's a good thing he's dead. He won't have to watch me turn into someone I don't want to be.

"I think the same with my mother," Ness says. "I grew up wanting to be an actor. We used to go to musicals and movies, and I felt this... this pull to be on stages and sets. Broadway, blockbusters, indies. All of it. We ran lines for school plays while our driver took me to acting classes an hour away. If she knew how much I was using all those lessons as a Caster, she would've told me to forget my dreams like the Senator did."

Losing Dad at seventeen was hard enough, but I can't imagine losing either of my parents at thirteen like Ness did.

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\*What was it like when she died?'

"Confusing," Ness says after a beat. "It was so sudden, and the Senator told me how to feel--anger, hate, disgust. He forced me to grieve in front of cameras I was a poster boy for children who lost loved ones because of celestial violence, and I leaned into that role because it's the only way I got support from the Senator. Don't get it twisted, I'm not talking about hugs. Handshakes on some days and pride on others. But it was something to fill that emptiness my mother left behind."

I tell him I'm sorry for his loss, even though it's too many years too late. You too," Ness says. "You're lucky that your last living parent loves you so much that she protected you at all costs. Mine threw me into the fire. He gets up and sits in the center of the room. It feels like an invitation, and I do the same. This time I'm able to breathe in the smell of the cheap lavender soap we've stocked in the bathrooms, and it settles my nerves like a well-lit candle.

"What was it like losing your father?" Ness asks.

I tell him how it was confusing too, even though we had months to prepare. Sometimes Dad pretended he was healthy, but we couldn't play along when he was coughing up blood and had fevers burning so hot we would rush him to the hospital. Going to school was brutal because we didn't know if he would still be alive when we got home. When it was looking beyond hopeless-wills were signed, goodbyes were had--the doctors suggested it couldn't hurt to explore clinical trials. Except it did hurt, and the blood poisoning blindsided us all--especially Brighton, who will never be fully right after finding Dad dead. You're lucky you've got your whole immortality thing going on, firefly."

"You think it's luck? This infinity cycle is a curse. It hasn't even been a month, and I can't look in the mirror because I don't see this savior, this chosen one, this hero that the Spell Walkers are counting on me to be. I'm not trying to fight for the rest of my life the rest of my lives.

"But my mother would be alive if we could all be immortal," Ness says.

"Your father too.

You think immortality is a solution to the world's problems?"

"I don't believe in the world anymore. This country is about to elect my father- the Senator-as their president, and no one with powers will be safe. It's only a matter of time until he discovers I'm alive, and he would have me

executed to protect his image. That lifelong security of yours would welcomed. I could run forever from the Senator and Luna and live my life.

"Running and fighting forever isn't life,'

» I say.

"It's better than death," he says.

I don't get where all this is coming from, but this sounds like a nightmare. "I don't want to lose loved ones, Ness, but I also don't trust a world where we can't die. To be hunted or tortured forever.

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Ness's amber eyes are fixed on me. "You're lying if you say you would give up resurrecting if you could."

"I'm already trying to figure out a cure. I don't want to die, but I refuse to live forever."

"You don't get it, firefly. It's too late. Luna is a chess master who has been setting up the board before any of us were born. She is patient and calculating. She could've given herself power years ago, but what use would that have been to her? She's like the Senator that way-powerless herself, but one of the most powerful people out there. But now she's dying, and the Crowned Dreamer has arrived in time for her to make her final move.

Prime example of someone I wouldn't ever want to live forever.

"What's wrong with her?"

"Blood illness," he says, and my chest squeezes.

"Once a host has taken in blood from one creature, it can't take another.

That's great news for whatever cure we come up with to bind powers.

"Luna's attempts to merge multiple essences have only gotten people deathly ill and weakened the power from the original creature significantly. It was pointless to her end goal."

"Which is what?"

"Immortality," Ness says.

True immortality is impossible," I say. "Even phoenixes die."

Ness nods. "Yeah, but when Keon first died and he wasn't reborn, Luna  
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realized she wouldn't have what was necessary to create immortality for herself on phoenix essence alone. She didn't quit like many alchemists before her-she went darker.

"Is there something about me that she thinks is the key?"

"No. She can't drain you for your blood. It has to come pure from a creature.

And Luna isn't looking for the key. She already found it. Your old friend Orton is proof."

"What is it? Celestial blood mixed with creature blood?"

"Orton wasn't a celestial. He was full specter.

"But he could phase through solid objects. No creature has that power'

"Correct," Ness says. He lets me sit with it, but I got nothing. "It's the most

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superior blood of all, and Luna partnered with alchemists who specialize in necromancy to get it she's been killing ghosts.

Oh, come on. I feel played, like he's been telling me some campfire story all along. "But you can't touch a ghost."

"Tell that to June, the first ever specter with ghost blood, who not only possessed Maribelle's mother and framed her for the Blackout, but saved my life when that explosion went off" Ness says. "This is what I'm talking about, firefly. Luna is next level. She will unite the blood of three entities--a hydra, a ghost, a phoenix. If you decapitate her, she'll regrow a new head. If you try to harm her body, she'll fade away. If you somehow manage to obliterate her completely, she'll be reborn.

"But it doesn't work. Not for long, anyway. Her test subjects are dying.

"Luna hasn't been using pure blood on her test subjects. But for her true elixir, she needs the head of a hydra that's never been decapitated before, a phoenix who has never been reborn, and ghosts with ties to her bloodline. Unite them all underneath the Crowned Dreamer's zenith at the Alpha Church of New Life, and she'll have her so-called Reaper's Blood. She will be the closest thing to Death to walk the streets, and she will make history by never becoming

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to Death to walk the streets, and she will make history by never becoming

loves chemistry so much he's going to pursue alchemy lessons for potion brewing in college. He was good-looking and better company and surprised the hell out of me when he dematerialized the door of my busted locker so I could get my calculator for my algebra midterm. I kept Nicholas's secret from everyone, especially Brighton, but even though he trusted me, he claimed he wasn't ready for a relationship, so we stayed friends. Can't help but wonder if things would've been different if I had a six-pack going for me.

Someone's selling these beautiful silver binoculars. I'd love to drop bank on a nice pair, but Ma will be the first to remind me that college textbooks don't pay for themselves. Especially since she's still caught up paying Dad's mountainous medical bills from an experimental trial with blood alchemy that made his bone cancer worse before he died in March. Dad was fascinated by the stars and looking forward to the Crowned Dreamer himself. Maybe I'll get to see the full marvel of this constellation when I'm older and can afford binoculars, and Dad will see it in another life, if you believe in that kind of thing.

Heeled boots pounding the gravel catch my attention, and I turn away from the tent to find a twentysomething woman approaching. Sweat glistens like she's been running for blocks. She's wearing an ill-fitting blazer that's missing a sleeve, and her arm looks sunburnt compared to her pale face; not exactly dressed for a late-night jog. Two figures are pursuing her from the air. One is a girl who's about ten feet above the ground, and the other is a boy who's being carried by winds that are sweeping up all sorts of trash as he passes.

I jump to my feet and backpedal from whatever is about to go down. I turn to the fire escape, where Brighton is four stories high. "Brighton, come back!"

The woman trips against the curb and slams into the concrete. I should stop being a punk and help her, but fear has a tighter grip and pins me to the wall. She stands and grabs the pole of the tent, and it glows orange. White fire runs up her arm as if she's been doused in gasoline and set alight. The canopy stands no chance-d

mountain of fire bounces to the other nearby tents. This

pandemonium definitely isn't going to help how people view celestials as dangerous.

Someone grips my shoulder, and I drop the tripod

You okay? Brighton asks. He was quick getting down here.

I catch my breath. "Let's go."

Wait a sec." Brighton is spellbound by the mayhem and holds up his camera.

You're kidding." I grab his arm, but Brighton breaks free.

"I got to document this.

"The hell you do.

For someone who was our school's salutatorian, Brighton can be pretty damn



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stupid. If he were anyone else, I would straight ditch. This is why I don't have it in me to be a hero like I used to pretend. I want to live too much to risk my own life. But Brighton dreams of getting this kind of action for his series. Most of the celestials in the area are smarter, not sticking around to see how this will play out. Some are teleporting so quickly I would've missed them if I'd blinked. The figures in the air break out of shadow and into the moonlight, the Spell Walker emblem on their power-proof vests glistening like the constellation that inspired their name.

"Maribelle and Atlas!" Brighton shouts, pumping his free fist.

What has this woman done that she's got the Spell Walkers chasing her? As her arm lights up again in white flames, I get a clear look at the woman's eyes. There are no astral bodies swirling within like a celestial's. They're dark except for one burning ring of orange. An eclipse-the mark of a specter. Now I know why the Spell Walkers are after her. I don't always agree with their violent, vigilante methods, but the Spell Walkers seem to be the only handful of heroes brave enough to admit that specters need to be stopped before they drive creatures to extinction and ruin the world. I hope every last specter gets locked up. Stealing blood from creatures to hook yourself up with powers, just because

I don't take my time in our room. Atlas was my home-whenever he was, that's where I felt happiest and safest. I throw everything that matters into the duffel bag the star-touched wine Atlas gifted me, Papa's binoculars, Mama's reading glasses, and the daggers I will drive into June. When I return downstairs, Wesley and I carry Atlas out to the playground and lay his body on top of a stretch of glass.

"What if he didn't see June possess me?" This question will haunt me until we're reunited. "What if all Atlas saw was me pointing a wand at him and firing a spell? He wouldn't even have had time to think about it. It was all so fast, Wes. I hate that it was so quick that he didn't have time to register that it wasn't me, and I hate that I'm upset that his death was swift."

"He knew you loved him," Wesley says.

"He would be alive if I didn't.

Wesley stays quiet. It's true.

"I'm technically the one who killed him, so I should be able to bring back his ghost. But only after I've killed June. Then I can send him to rest in true peace."

"I want to be there if you'll let me.

I nod.

"I'll see you soon, Atlas.

I call for my power, focusing on getting vengeance on June, and I close my eyes once the dark yellow flames enshroud Atlas's body. I won't leave him, but I can't watch. For an hour, I sit with my back to Atlas's body, crying against Wesley as we breathe in charcoal and other odors. Then, when Atlas's body is gone, I empty the bottle of star-touched wine in a dying plant. I scoop up Atlas's ashes with a gardening shovel and pour as much as can fit of him into the bottle

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and I pray to the mightiest of constellations it will be enough to summon him back for a proper goodbye.

"When will I see you again?"

"I'm sure our paths will cross. Take care of your family, Wes

"Be safe, Maribelle.

I head for the parking lot with the bottle of ashes close to my chest. Being a Spell Walker, I didn't always want to save everyone. Too many people hated me so fiercely, but now, I'm sure of my calling. Pure vengeance.

Out by Atlas's car, Brighton is waiting by the driver's seat with his laptop under his arm and backpack over his shoulder. "Do you need some company?" he asks. "I'll do whatever it takes. I'm not like Emil. I won't hold you back."

I nod.

"Let's go. We have a ghost to kill."

I wish this was some story, but it's all truth. Luna has lived a life engineering essences to make herself invincible. There's no winning.

But if she dies, she'll have to start over like me, right?"

Ness shakes his head. "If her calculations are correct--and let's count on them being right- she'll be away from the world for a single moment and reborn as herself."

"So she's

got the hydra now. What's her next move?"

"What's today?"

"Tuesday."

He takes a deep breath.

"Luna moves for Older Cemetery to capture the ghosts of her parents--tonight.

"What? We're screwed.

"Probably. But the summoning is tricky enough that she's hired Anklin Prince, this top alchemist, for the assist. The longer someone has been dead, the harder it is to catch their ghost. Unless they died violent deaths and didn't have a chance to make peace with their lives. Luna murdered her parents when she was seventeen. The only time I believe she's ever gotten her own hands dirty.

"If it was that long ago, they'll never find their ghosts

"They died very, very violent deaths. Luna was just as creative back then as she is cruel today.

So Luna's parents have been lost and wandering for decades, and she was going to bring them back to obliterate them forever. I don't want to go up against someone so twisted.

"What about the phoenix?"

Then I figure it out, the light bulb moments I

always envy Brighton for having, but this one scares me. "The century phoenix."

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Ness nods. "If you want to put an end to her madness, you have to end her, firefly. Period. Problem is, you don't have a killer's bone in you. You wouldn't even let Maribelle murder a remorseless assassin. Face it. Luna has you beat.

On the morning of Dad's funeral, I refused to get off the train when we reached our stop. Brighton had to hold open the doors while Ma pleaded with me to take her hand, to be the strength she needed to get through the ceremony. Passengers saw that we were dressed in black and crying, but their sympathy and patience didn't last long before people started shouting at me. They didn't care that I wasn't ready to face my father in a casket.

I don't want to get out of this car and fight Orton.

"I'm not ready," I say to Brighton and Prudencia, who are in the backseat with me.

"We'll be there with you," Brighton says.

Maribelle turns around from the driver's seat.

"You'll be keeping your distance.

"I don't have the power to stop Orton," I say. "I got lucky the first time."

"We've got the element of surprise again," Iris says. "And you have us too.

Iris's powerhouse strength and Maribelle's levitation and agility are a boost, for sure. "The objective isn't to kill. We need to lay him out so we can question him on Luna's advancements in alchemy.

"But if you have to defend yourself, defend yourself," Maribelle says. "If it's Eighteen: Burnout

kill or be killed, light him up.

"Do everything you can to avoid killing," Iris adds. But she doesn't disagree with Maribelle either. This is not the thing I wanted to see them bond over. I get out of the car, and my legs are trembling as I follow them into an empty warehouse for Eternal Lerna Footwear, this company I hate since they produce shoes made of hydra leather. The lights must be busted, and the sun setting isn't helping us at all. I'm about to try and conjure a quick flick of fire when shards of glass from broken windows crunch under my boots. I freeze, terrified that Orton is about to pounce out of the shadows and strike me down before I can defend myself with a single lesson I've learned. I'd make history as a so-called chosen one who was taken down his first week on the job. But all is okay as Brighton turns on his camera's light, helping us guide the way. The smell of fresh kicks, rubber, and glue grows stronger as we pass waist-high tables where the factory workers handled business.

Maribelle hovers to a balcony while the rest of us creep up these steel steps, and we all freeze when we hear voices in the room ahead. I make out Orton's cruel laugh, and it sends shivers down my spine. I want to hit a one-eighty and hide in the car, but we're in too deep already. It sounds like a group of people in there. and I wish I could see through these walls so I would know how outnumbered we're about to be.

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We press ourselves against the wall outside the door, and Iris gestures to Brighton and Prudencia to get some distance. Brighton is hesitant, but Prudencia drags him back by his vest.

"If she can't help me, then I'm done helping her! Orton shouts from inside the room.

Iris counts down from three and punches the door off its hinges. I follow her and Maribelle in.

The office is cramped enough without the six people in dirty gray jumpsuits and crimson belts staring us down-

Everyone is falling apart.

Maribelle and Atlas have been hitting the streets the past couple nights, trying to track down any acolyte or alchemist or dealer who has a direct connection to Luna. When Iris isn't locking herself away she's been negotiating with Ness for some intel, but he's not budging on what the Blood Casters are up to. Eva is bone-tired as she bounces between therapy sessions with celestials who are feeling more hopeless by the day. Wesley is clearly itching for a trip to Philadelphia to visit Ruth and Esther, but remains close to shop for supplies and coordinate moves to other shelters for the celestials who no longer feel safe under our care.

I wish I could send Brighton, Prudencia, and Ma elsewhere. Brighton has been damn near manic since he pulled his video offline. He's locked himself in the computer lab, and from what I can see, he's monitoring our social media accounts but not posting anything as Iris instructed. I think he's looking for an impossible solution. Sort of like Prudencia, who is spending all her time in the library to unearth more information about the mysterious ingredients Sera listed in the journal. I try to help, but she's been rejecting my company. I can't help but feel like she blames me for everything that's going wrong in her life, like having

"About what?"

"You're extraordinary.

I nod. "Unfortunately, Luna, life has got to be lost to preserve it.

I stand over her and cage her in lightning until she's dead.

I've done what no one else could do. I killed the one Blood Caster who Eva feared confronting on the battlefield, and I executed the queenpin before she could become unstoppable. I can't wait to bust out of here and get back to Nova to celebrate with my family and Prudencia. I'll ask the crew what we can do about getting me some proper Spell Walker gear and then we'll take down the next threat.

The room spins and everything reverses in rapid flashes--what little color there was returns to Luna's face as lightning retreats back inside my hands, she's running backward, the acolyte's corpse rises and exits, I'm pressed against the wall again and Dione's hand is back around my throat.

"You're supposed to be dead," I say in choked breaths.

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"Never," Luna says. "Especially not at the hands of some fool who cannot

tell an illusion apart from reality.

"Illusion?"

Luna eyes one of the vials. "These are potions of mine that failed to convert humans into celestials and were revealed to have hallucinatory side effects. I couldn't keep risking the health of my acolytes, so we've been selling them on the streets and filming the drinkers in the event one proves to exhibit actual powers so we can study the subjects. We've been marketing it as Brew-Ness's idea, but surely he told you this given that he's on your side, correct?"

I'm powerless and speechless. Of course I was drinking Brew like those clowns in the park. It was so lifelike, but the reality of Ness being a traitor is just as crushing. My brother thinks Ness is trying to turn over some new leaf and make an honest guy out of himself.

Dione drags me through the hall with ease, even though I'm resisting and

Twenty-Nine: Extraordinary

dragging my feet. She throws me into a room where I skid across the concrete, scratching my arms and face, and rolling into Stanton's feet. June continues reading through a dusty book, not glancing up at me once. Luna is the last one in and locks the door behind her, as if I stand any chance at getting that close to escape with three Blood Casters here.

"Your fantasy of what makes someone a hero is your downfall," Luna says.

"Not a long fall, of course, since you've never known great heights. To save and rebuild the world demands a soul that will do what is necessary. You don't possess the nature or the heart that I do. But that's okay. Everyone has their role."

Stanton lifts me by the back of the neck and forces me into a chair against the wall.

My camera that I dropped at the cemetery for the wand is here and facing me. You crave the spotlight so badly," Luna says.

"Go ahead and give us a smile.

## **BOOK REVIEW - *INFINITY SON* By Adam Silvera**

### **PROFANITY COUNT AND OTHER SENSITIVE WORDS**

Hell	Sexuality	Stealing
Killing	Ghost	D*mn
Sucked	Drinking	Brew
Blood Casters	Spell Walkers	Levitate
Kidnapping	Creatures	Killing parents
Casters	Powers to heal	Enforcers
Alchemist	Political fighting	Hoovering

### **RED FLAGS**

Fantasy story Harry Potter theories

Storyline uses the above words extensively throughout the story

Language

Violence

Drinking

Supernatural content

### **CONCLUSION**

Not appropriate literary content for K-12 schools